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ABSTRACT

The linguistic philosophies of H. P. Grice and J. L. Austin are discussed, and ways of applying their ideas to learning activities for gifted students are suggested. Grice's work focuses on prerequisites for successful conversation, the cooperative principle, and features of conversational implicature. Austin's work analyzes the distinction between performative and constative utterances. Activities for gifted students could involve identification of performative verbs and the ways in which they could fail to be performative. The students could also observe examples of performatives outside of the classroom and then develop their own definitions of performatives and the ways in which they can fail. Austin also addressed the nature of truth in language and distinguished five classes of performatives: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behavitives, and expositives. (RW)

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HOW TO DO THINGS WITH WORDS: LANGUAGE AND THE GIFTED

By: Dr. E. G. King

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Language is a source of fascination for many gifted students. A neglected direction of cashing in on this interest is the study of the ideas of contemporary Anglo-American philosophy. The study of language has dominated twentieth century analytic philosophy. Their ideas can provide a richer and more self-conscious understanding of ordinary-language usage for students especially in the upper elementary and secondary levels (roughly grades 7-12). The two philosphers I will treat explicitly are H. P. Grice and J. L. Austin. Other well-known and important philosophers whose ideas have influenced this presentation (and whose ideas could also be developed for similar purposes) include: Wittgenstein, Quine, Davidson, Dummett, Ziff, Searle, Strawson and Chomsky).

Among other purposes we use language to communicate (Cf. Swanson and Watson, 1982, p. 173 for seven purposes of language). In view of the complexity of language it is somewhat surprising that we do this so well. For communicating successfully involves so many assumptions and so much potential ambiguity being overcome. Yet we do succeed in making ourselves understood most of the time. To illustrate the complexity involved in a simple communication we can spell out just some of the assumptions involved. Suppose you ask "What time is it?" and I wish

to respond without making any assumptions. Then I would have to proceed to ask a series of questions before I could answer. These might include: "What language do you wish me to reply in?"; "What time zone?"; "Using which units of time?"; "In what number system?"; "To what degree of precision?". Such an example would stimulate meta-linguistic awareness which begins in the normal child at about five years of age. It would be easy to generate in a group of gifted students attempts to raise questions such as these for their own examples. One might in this vein challenge students to see if they could say anything which is so clear and precise that noone could raise any questions. I think it will soon become apparent that this is not possible. Perhaps one might also pursue the question of precision. Does precision always lead to greater clarity. Suppose we take an example. You tell a group of students to take a step forward and they obey although a step is not a very precise term. If instead you said more precisely, "Step forward .9672 meters", they could not obey. The precision is spurious. Language is a part of life. It is intelligible in context. Clarity, precision, lack of ambiguity are all relative to context. The reason we are able to communicate so well is that we share the same way of life and make the same assumptions. So a question like "What time is it?" is clear in context and we would answer with varying precision depending on the context.

An awareness of the possible ambiguity of language (Cf. Morris has a cold) and part of the reason why this is so often not a real problem leads to another issue which could also be fruitfully pursued with many gifted students. This is the understanding of natural language by computers. Currently as you are well aware computers communicate in artificial languages such as Basic, Fortran, Pascal, etc. which partially use English. We are in a position to see why it is so difficult for a computer to learn ordinary English. All the sorts of assumptions we make in communicating would have to be spelled out explicity. There is a great deal of controversy within artificial intelligence on the prospects for successful programming of a computer that speaks English. (Cf. Dreyfus, 1979; Haugeland, 1981). In exploring this issue students would learn a great deal about computers and the attempts to develop such programs. They might also get into the issues of formalizations of theories and the theoretical limits that work in mathematical logic seems to subject any formal theory. Here the well-known work of Godel and Turing come to mind. And they would also perforce learn about the different components of language study: phonological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. All four are dealt with in linguistics but philosophy of language deals only with the latter two. It is in the area of pragmatics that the ideas of Austin and Grice both fit.

It is in this area that language learning for computers faces the greatest difficulty. However the area of semantics would present considerable problems as well. Successful formalization of semantics is nowhere near completion. A simple example illustrates the sort of difficulty involved. We can draw the inference that I have my foot in my shoe from the premises that: 'My foot is in my sock' and 'My sock is in my shoe'. But we cannot draw the inference 'There is a pain in my shoe' from the premises that 'My foot is in my shoe' and 'I have a pain in my foot'. The reason why the inferences are not equally acceptable depends on the meaning of 'in'. Can we program the computer to have all the required meanings of 'in' and also rules to select the appropriate meaning in context? We are now dealing only with literal meaning not with figurative use of language which would introduce further complications. (A good treatment of linguistics is found in Wilson, 1981). The advantage of raising a problem like this is that the student can approach the computer in terms of looking at its potential and learn about it in terms of solving a problem which he finds personally interesting. The volume of material available on this topic is staggering and the final answer is certainly not in. It could even lead a student into a career.

Our concern in the remainder of the paper is with the ideas of two thinkers whose ideas relate more to

pragmatics, that is, the use of language which involves both the linguistic and non-linguistic context in which we communicate with language. Grice spells out the general conditions for conversation to succeed irrespective of context. That is, what must be assumed in order to communicate in conversation. His points are very commonsensical but noone had worked out the ideas explicitly before. Grice's work is important in philosophy because it allows a formal theory of logical grammar to ignore a large number of cases where we feel there is an implication. For our purposes it is important in learning about language. We can apply it directly to understanding everyday conversation better.

In "Logic and Conversation" Grice notes the divergence between '-', '.', 'v' and '(x)' and 'not', 'and', 'or' and 'every'. (This divergence also presents some difficulty for computers.) Two groups interpret this divergence differently. The formalist whose work is directed toward an ideal language holds what matters is establishing decision procedures as far as possible and serving the needs of science. Hence the meaning of ordinary words can be ignored as confused in so far as it differs from logical constants. (This direction would be favorable to developing a formal semantics for computers.) The informalists hold that there are many other important uses of language. Many valid arguments are not formalizable. So there is room for informal logic which is more

or less unsystematic dealing with the counterparts of the logical constants in natural language. Grice thinks that both groups are wrong because they assume a divergence which is the result of a failure to pay adequate attention to the nature and importance of conditions governing conversation.

Grice holds that general conditions apply to conversation irrespective of subject matter. The first condition he calls the cooperative principle. "Make your conversational contribution such as is required at that stage in which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged." (Grice, p. 67). Basically this involves: a) Be as informative as required but not more so (which can be confusing as well as a waste of time). E.g. "How do you feel?" would call for a short conventional response when said by a friend in a greeting but would call for more elaboration when asked by the doctor visiting you on the day after surgery. Giving too much information is especially confusing to children. b) Make your contribution true, that is, do not say what you believe to be false or that for which you lack adequate evidence. This provides for a side discussion on the nature of evidence, what constitutes adequacy, etc. This could be a far-reaching side-issue if some students are interested. What is adequate evidence if the statement is factual, scientific, mathematical, moral, political, religious, etc.

One can deal with canons of evidence as well as impressing on the student the importance of not saying things for which they have no warrant. There is a moral as well as an intellectual dimension here. c) Be relevant. This is admittedly vague and is difficult to specify. But it is very important. It also effects how we interpret what is said. For example, when asked on the WISC-R: "What is the thing to do when you cut your finger?"; "I would bleed, wouldn't you?" is not really a relevant reply. It misunderstands the intent of the question. Most of the time we assume remarks are relevant and even when not obviously so we interpret them this way by drawing implications. (We shall see more on this as we proceed to conversational implicatures in Grice. Cf. Smith and Wilson, 1981, p. 175). d) Be perspicuous; that is, avoid obscurity of expression and ambiguity. Be brief and orderly.

Some points here are clearly more important than others. It is obviously much worse to say something you know is false than to be prolix. The rules Grice suggests presuppose that the purpose of the exchange is maximal exchange of information. If you stop to think about it, it is clear that we do normally observe the cooperative principle. It is normal and easier to tell the truth. Generally we are trained this way. Grice has simply made explicit what we do in successful communication. But we do it without being self-conscious of what we are

doing. By being aware of the cooperative principle the student can more self-consciously communicate more effectively. If communication is not progressing well, he may be able to pinpoint the difficulty and possibly overcome it.

We are not in a position to relate the cooperative principle to conversational implicature. A participant in a talk exchange can fail to fulfil one of the rules or maxims in various ways which include the following: 1) He may quietly and unostentatiously violate a maxim in which case he is likely to be misunderstood. 2) He may opt out explicitly saying "I have no more to say" or "No comment". 3) He may be unable to be informative or have inadequate evidence and is thus faced with a dilemma. Either say nothing or violate the cooperative principle. 4) He may blatantly flout a maxim. Grice refers to this as exploiting a maxim.

We can now characterize a conversational implicature. A person saying p may implicate q provided that: 1) he is observing the cooperative principle; 2) the supposition that he is aware that or thinks that q is required in order to make his saying as if to say p consistent with this assumption; and 3) the speaker thinks the hearer would grasp this connection. Suppose I say to someone: "How is Pete getting along at the job? (at a bank)", and he replies "Quite well, he likes his colleagues and he hasn't been to prison yet". His response seems irrelevant unless he is implicating that Pete is dishonest. Assume

condition 1), that is, the cooperative principle is being observed. In order for the reply to be relevant then "Pete is dishonest" is being implicated. For me to understand I must be able to grasp the connection. In that case we can say that p implicates q although clearly p does not imply q.

In order to work out the conversational implicature the hearer will rely on: 1) The conventional meaning of the words and the identity of any reference involved. (One might digress on the reference-sense distinction here and delve into these aspects of semantics in terms of student interest. It is a huge area and one which has been written about extensively in the past decade or so although it is certainly not a new distinction). 2) The cooperative principle and its maxims. 3) The context, linguistic and non-linguistic of the utterance. 4) Other items of background knowledge and 5) The fact or supposed fact that all relevant items under 1)-4) are available to both participants and that both participants know or at least assume that they are.

Take some examples to clarify conversational implicature further.

Suppose I say, "I'm out of gas".

Reply: "There's a gas station around the corner."

The implicature is that it is open. Otherwise the response is irrelevant.

A "Smith does not seem to have a girl friend these days."
B "He's been paying a lot of visits to New York recently."
The implicature is that he has a girl friend in New York.
A "Where does C live?" (He wants to stop at his house).
B "In the East end."
The implicature is that B does not know more exactly where C lives but wants to at least respond.

Suppose you write a letter of recommendation for someone and although you do not say anything unfavourable you do not really say anything which would indicate they are suitable for the position. The implicature is that they are not suitable or that you do not recommend them even though you have not said so in writing. Another source of implicatures are tautologies such as business is business, women are women etc. Although they would seem to violate the cooperative principle be being uninformative, they may be quite informative by implicature. Thus the implication is perhaps that this is the way one would expect a woman to act or that morality is irrelevant to business, etc. Or to take another example; suppose you ask me if p is true. Instead of saying yes or no, I present several arguments in support of p, this might implicate that p is controversial but that I think it is true (assuming the arguments are good ones).

One final example of failing to be brief. Instead of writing that "Miss Brown sang "Beautiful Dreamer", the critic writes "Miss Brown produced a series of notes

which correspond closely with the score of "Beautiful Dreamer". Surely he is implicating a poor performance. All of the cases considered are particularized conversational implicatures. The implicature is not normally carried by saying p. There is no implication at all. But given the whole context the implicature does follow. Are there also cases of generalized ccnversational implicature? Grice thinks there are. Suppose one said "X is meeting a woman tonight." The implicature is that it is not his wife or mother or sister. This does not depend on the particular context. Another example would be "I have been sitting in a car all morning." The implicature is that it is not my car. This would not be the case if I said that I broke a finger. The implicature in this case is that it is my finger. However we do not seem to have criteria which would allow a systematic listing of such generalized implicatures.

Finally conversational implicatures must possess certain features: 1) The cooperative principle is observed. 2) Non-detachability; that is, we need a context to handle it. We often are not aware of how much this matters generally. Sentences without a context are frequently not meaningful. Even when they seem to be, it is often because we can supply the context and do so without even being aware that we are doing so. In this respect we could note that basically dictionaries are books which provide clues for using words in sentences.

The larger dictionaries provide many actual sentences as examples. It is not words that have meaning but sentences. (Austin stresses this point--in fact, the sentence itself is often meaningful only in a broader context.) 3) It is not part of the meaning of expressions as such (that is, there is no implication). 4) The truth of what is implicated is not determined by the truth of what is said. If p is true and q is implicated, it does not follow that q is true. 5) An element of indeterminacy is involved because there are so many factors.

Grice has provided an approach which allows for better understanding of conversation when this is intended to be informative. He holds that it can be applied to other purposes such as persuading or offering advise, etc. Once the nature of conversational implicature has been taught it would be worthwhile to try working through the details with students supposing that one is trying to give advise rather than communicate information. In this case the cooperative principle would have to be reformulated to relate to this purpose. The various maxims would also require reformulation. Grice provides a few brief comments indicating how this might be done. But students could try to list the purposes of using language and see if Grice's approach can be adapted to all of them. Here they would be working on material with considerable structure but no predetermined answers. That is, they would be doing some original thinking. They could also take conversations from dramas and

analyse them.

In his lifetime J. J. Austin made his reputation as a teacher. His three books were all published posthumously. There are a number of good accounts of Austin as a person and as a teacher which would offer a human interest angle. (Cf. Sir Isaiah Berlin, et al. Essays on John Austin, especially the first three essays). There are also good general accounts of his way of doing philosophy (See for example, J. O. Urmson "John Austin" in R. Rorty, Ed., The Linguistic Turn, pp. 232-238; see also articles by Hampshire and Cavell in this same volume). Austin has been seen as a virtuoso of linguistic analysis even by those who think that he was ultimately unsuccessful. He is described as a "Linnaeus of speech acts"; "a composer of linguistic minuets and Kleine Nachtmusiken" although the scope of his theory is more like a symphony. Austin wants to elucidate the total speech act in the total speech situation.

The ideas of Austin are found in two short articles "Performative-Constative", originally written in French and delivered at a French-English dialogue in philosophy in 1958, "Performative Utterances" based on a 1956 BBC radio talk with minor corrections and a relatively short book How to Do Things with Words based on the 1955 William James lectures at Harvard. There is considerable overlap in the three sources with very little in the articles not found in the book which I am using as the primary source for his ideas.

It is a work in the philosophy of language using a method which has been labelled ordinary-language analysis--a method which Austin used in other areas such as theory of perception where he wrote so brilliantly. It can be related to empirical linguistics (Cf. Rosenberg and Travis, final article) which relates it to Chomskyan linguistics. Many works in linguistics which treat pragmatics and not just syntactics and semantics refer explicitly to Austin and try to incorporate at least part of his views on performatives within their own scientific studies on language. Austin himself speaks favourably about such a direction for his thought whether or not he would have approved the specific attempts lodged thus far. But if one is interested in the ideas of Chomsky and transformational grammar it would be easy to take off in this direction from the study of Austin. Some questions that might spark interest in Chomsky and those influenced by him include the following. What is grammar? Do children have innate knowledge of grammar rules? (Cf. the language acquisition device or LAD so frequently discussed in the literature). It is interesting to note in passing that the work of Chomsky has sparked renewed interest in the whole question of innate knowledge which had been a relatively dead issue since Locke's critique over 200 years ago. How do children learn language so well and so quickly without having anything more than average intelligence (roughly in eighteen months)? Are there any universal features

of all languages? What should a good grammar do? Is language usage of its very nature creative? (This might be related to the topic of language and computers also). It has been noted that the child is creative in the use of language. He says things he may never have heard. E.g. "I don't want none." This is true even if the only language models to which the child has been exposed do not use such constructions. You as adults can understand sentences you have never heard before or make up a sentence you have never heard before. E.g. "I saw a purple elephant paint a beautiful landscape". At the high school level there are sources the students could read to get answers to such questions (not Chomsky's own writings, at least, not initially). For younger children it would be necessary to do some direct teaching to provide an informational base for fruitful discussion.

Coming now directly to Austin's own thought. I want to deal with what Austin called performative utterances. Although this term is later replaced by illocutionary acts (the overlap is not perfect) his views on this early idea are still fruitful. I will not be concerned with all the details of his theory of speech acts. Although this later theory does involve significant changes I do not think it renders obsolete some of his key points made about performative utterances.

Austin distinguishes performatives from constatives as different types of speech acts. Performatives involve saying something to do something. How are

utterences operative in this way? Well, sometimes there exist rules or legal provisions or more or less commonly and/or officially recognized practices, that is, conventions which provide that saying something constitutes or counts as doing something. E.g., "I will" in a marriage ceremony does in fact result in being married if both persons say it at the appropriate place, etc. Saying "Three no trump" does constitute bidding if it is your turn to bid in a bridge game. "Not guilty" does involve an acquital when this is the jury's verdict read by the court official. There are many performative uses of language both in formal situations and in everyday life.

In contrast, philosophers have concentrated on what Austin labels 'constatives'. Historically philosophers tended to focus only on statements which can be true or false. Of course they recognized that there were questions, commands and exclamations as well. But these were for the most part ignored and they wrote about language as though all sentences could be taken as either true or false. The revolution in philosophy, the so-called linguistic turn, led to the verification theory of meaning and later the meaning is use theory. The verification theory of meaning does not get away from the position which Austin called the descriptive fallacy. The meaning is use theory does broaden the outlook and had some liberating effect. But Austin thought that it was still too narrow. Utterances that are grammatically statements

tend to be treated as true or false or as merely emotive. Austin thinks that many statements are meaningful but not true or false. That is, many statements are performatives. The examples need not involve any problematic philosophical terms like 'good', 'right', 'must' etc. They can be ordinary everyday uses of language. E.g. "I apologize" is an act of apologizing. It is not a true or false statement although it is true that I am apologizing if I say this (in appropriate circumstances). Similarly when I say "I bet you ..."; "I name this ship ...". When such things are said seriously rather than in jest or in telling a story etc. they cannot be false although they can go wrong in other ways. Austin developed a doctrine of the infelicities to deal with this as we shall see later. For now two illustrations will suffice. If I say to my wife "I divorce you", my statement does not do anything. There are no conventions in our society which allow divorce in this fashion. So although my statement is not false, it is not successful either as a performative. Similarly I do not succeed in betting if I say "I bet you ..." unless you take the bet (although there is considerable variation in how this might be done).

So far we have introduced a reasonably clear distinction between performatives and constatives. The distinction is no doubt a little fuzzy at the edges. But so are most other distinctions. Because there are borderline cases does not mean that a distinction is a poor one.

The distinction between living and nonliving is a valuable one and not rendered ineffective because viruses do not fit well in either category. Reality is more complex than our conceptual systems for dealing with it. However such conceptual systems are frequently illuminating nonetheless. This distinction like all others inevitably involves some oversimplification. But this is, Austin suggests, the vocation of the philosopher anyway. (One could easy detour into a discussion of the value and limitations of distinctions and categorial systems).

But to come back to our distinction. What are criteria which distinguish performatives from other utterances? Initially, Austin looked for gramatical criteria (his own training was originally in classics). Although he did not find clear-cut grammatical criteria he did find some standard forms for performatives which are worth dealing with. It is not surprising that there are no grammatical criteria since a performative is a saying which is a doing and that which makes it a performative is extralinguistic. The two standard forms are: 1) The first person singular present indicative active. E.g. "I promise." But not "I promised" or "He promised" or "You promise" or even "I will promise." None of these involves promising. 2) "You are hereby warned." "Passengers are hereby warned." These are examples of second and third person uses with hereby. Although many performatives are in this form or the former form, not

all are. One cannot say either that these are necessary or sufficient conditions. One can have performatives without these forms and one can have first person indicative active without having a performative. For example "I know", "I am sorry" can be used to report my feelings rather than as performatives. The sign "Bull" could be used as a warning as also can "Beware of dog" which do not use either form. Since the total speech act in the whole context is involved to determine whether or not there is a performative, it is, as we mentioned, not surprising that there are no grammatical criteria. (In linguistics Austin's views are usually treated in pragmatics not in syntactics). Are there any criteria to distinguish performatives from other utterences? There are not in the sense of a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. There are only the sort of rough and ready conditions listed earlier which do the job generally, but do not provide a decision procedure. An excellent project for a group of gifted students would be to take a dictionary and look for all the verbs which may be performative. Each student could take a section. This is, in fact, what Austin himself did to get his initial data. If one is uncertain about a particular verb then put it down. Then when you have a list exchange them and let each student decide which are performatives. For each case he needs to try to construct a speech act in which it is used as a performative. Where this cannot

be done make a second list. Then the students can get together. The performatives with examples can be gone over by the group. Some may be rejected in the group discussion. Trying to put them in one of the two standard forms may be a helpful devise here. Finally they can go over the list of verbs which seem not to be performative and see if anyone disagrees and try to reach a consensus. This will give then a good stock of examples to work through the rest of the material on Austin.

The next part of the theory concerns what Austin labelled the doctrine of the infelicities. He distinguished six ways in which performatives can go wrong although he admits that they can go wrong in more than one way and that there may be some overlap in the distinctions. Basically, there will be a lack of something which should be present for the performative to accomplish it's effect. A1) The conventional procedure including the words is defective. The example used before of "I divorce you" would be an example. Another would be the lack of water in baptism. If I say in court "I swear to tell the truth and not too much of the truth", I would not be swearing an oath. A2) The appropriate person or circumstances are lacking. E.g. the person sitting in the judge's chair is a janitor who put on the judges robes and wig while the judge is unconscious in his chambers. He has no authority and his decisions are not performative. I grab the bottle and christen the ship using a name objectionable to the owners (where I have not been

delegated to perform this function.) Or a real judge sentences someone who insults him in a restaurant to 30 days on the spot.

B1) The procedure is not properly executed. This could overlap with A1 in that words are not said correctly. All parties must do their part. In a bet as mentioned earlier it must be taken for the "I bet ..." to be a performative. Similarly if I say "I will" in a wedding ceremony and everything else is done properly except that the woman does not say "I will" my utterance is not performative.

B2) Everything must be done completely.

In all cases of A1-B2 there is a misfire, that is, the performative does not come off. Thus if I am already married the second attempted marriage does not come off even though people may be fooled. There is not a performative in saying "I will". However there are consequences. But it is not a case of using language to do something. It is a failure to do what this language would do if the conditions for its being carried off were all met.

But an act can also go wrong in ways which are abuses of speech although in such cases there is a performative. If I promise insincerely I still promise. Austin mentions two ways in which we can abuse performatives:

C1) The persons involved must have the appropriate feelings, beliefs, etc., or the act is defective although it does not misfire. Hence if I apologize without really feeling sorry this is insincere but I have apologized.

Or if I congratulate you when I think you do not deserve it, then I am insincere but I have still congratulated you.

C2) Subsequent behaviour should bear out the appropriate feelings. Again there is no misfire even though the act is defective. E.g., if I apologize and then continue to treat the person badly.

Not every example of a performative can go wrong in every way. Many can go wrong in more than one way. It would be instructive to discuss a substantial number of the student examples to see how they might go wrong. Examples which do not involve a conventional procedure cannot go wrong in certain ways. The advantage for the children is that they are learning the generalities in terms of their own examples and they could even end up modifying or adding to Austin's list of how performatives can go wrong. After all he did not propose the list as the final word on the matter. They could also come up with their own description of performatives at this point. A follow-up activity might involve watching TV-shows--with each student watching a different show and a variety of types of programs being watches. They would record at least some of the performatives. I think in terms of the abilities of the students they would be able to write down the sentences and the next day fill in enough context to make it intelligible for group discussion. The idea would be to see how often performatives are used in various settings--such as soap operas, situation comedies, adventure

series which would supposedly involved a great deal of ordinary conversation, news shows, discussion and debate programs, sports, etc. One could also do this sort of thing with lunch or diner conversation, at home or at school etc. Or monitor the speech acts in a class for a half-hour period. This might very well include performatives such as warnings, threats, promises, evaluations, appraisals, etc.

Finally Austin does note that a performative which satisfies all of A1 to C2 could still be subject to criticism. E.g. a verdict could still be unjust although not deliberately so or an umpires decision might be incorrect. A promise might be foolish, a warning unnecessay. I do not know if there is any systematic way of listing such possible criticisms of a performative which has not misfired and where there is no lack of appropriate feelings, beliefs etc. The question could be thrown open to the students. It would take a great deal of time to answer and the answer might not be decisive. If the answer is negative this would be a failure to find a systematic way of listing objections. If a system is found it might be incomplete. But it would only be worthwhile pursuing if there is a real interest in doing so.

Austin relates performatives to other words which have been prominent in philosophy: 'truth', 'implies', 'presupposition' and 'entails'. These relations allow for the developing of some interesting points about

performative as well as some new directions not all of which need be followed by any given group of students. As we have seen performatives are not true or false. This is in contrast with constatives which are either true or false. Suppose I say "I apologize" the performative is neither true nor false. But it is true that I am apologizing. It is also true that there are conventions allowing for such a performative (Cf. rules A1 and A2). It is also true that I should have certain thoughts, feelings, beliefs, etc. It is true that I am subsequently committed to behaving as though I have apologized. Of course, we could add to the list of truths more or less indefinitely such as I exist, I am a human being, I understand some English, etc. So if a performative succeeds then there are some other statements which are true. On that constative side truth and falsity are not so straightforward as we often think. To take Austin's usual example: "This cat is on the mat". It might seem that this is a clear example of a proposition that is true provided the cat we are talking about is on the mat. But as Austin notes sentences are often only roughly true. How much of the cat must be on the mat for the sentence to be true? Does "on" require physical contact or would it be true if the cat is suspended from ropes and is say one centimeter above the mat? How many questions of this sort can be asked is mainly a matter of ingenuity.

These considerations are raised to lead to two main lines of thought about the important semantic concept of truth. First, truths are interrelated. If p is true then

so are an indefinitely large number of other propositions q, r, s, etc. This can be explored easily by way of example. Try to think of a true proposition which does not presuppose that some other propositions are true. Or assume some propositions to be true for the sake of argument and try to avoid assuming anything else is true. It cannot be done. This has important consequences for our beliefs. Beliefs are propositions we take to be true. This means that they are interrelated systems. If you change one then you also have to change many others to remain consistent. Of course, we do not always do so and so it is common for people to hold incompatible beliefs because they have not thought things through. It is important to be aware that every time we change our views alterations should be made in the whole system of beliefs. The effect will of course vary with the centrality of the belief changed.

Another direction is the question of the nature of truth. Austin himself held the Aristotelian correspondence theory of truth. Ironically he debated this view against Strawson who held a performative theory of truth. Other views include the very influential semantic conception of truth developed by Tarski, the coherence theory, the redundancy theory of Ramsey as well as some significant variations on many of these theories or attempts to combine elements of more than one theory. I will not attempt to describe the theories but only point out

another possible detour.

Various logical concepts such as 'entails', 'implies' and 'presupposes' apply to performatives as well as to constatives and Austin discusses these briefly. The relations involved are more informal and less rigorous. Saying "The cat is on the mat" implies that I believe it. Similarly saying "I promise" implies that I intend to do what I promised. If I say "All John's children are married" I presuppose that John has children. Similarly if I say "I will" in a wedding ceremony there is the presupposition that I am free to marry. Thirdly, "All men are mortal" entails that some men are mortal. So "I promise" entails that "I ought to keep my promise." So many of the logical relations which apply to constatives and are usually exemplified exclusively in terms of such examples can be extended to performatives. The distinction between the two cannot be made in terms of truth as simply as initially proposed nor in terms of logical relations.

Austin went on to undercut the original distinction showing that in a sense all utterances are performative. He then developed his more general theory of speech acts distinguishing the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. I hold (Cf. Warnock, passim) that the original class of performatives is not affected by these later developments. I will not try to treat the details of the later theory.

Next Austin tried to develop the notion of an explicit performative. As we noted before performatives are not always in the first person present indicative active. But could they always be put in this form? Would this be a good test to see if a verb is a performative? Although it turns out to be unsatisfactory it is a useful test. Students could try this out on their earlier list of performatives. Just to indicate why it is not totally satisfactory. Warning is definitely a performative. But "I warn" is not an acceptable form. And "I state" is performative on this standard but it should not fit. Verbs in this form are sometimes performative but are also sometimes descriptive or are reports. For example, I approve, I approve of and I feel approval. If it is not a performative Austin suggests we can use the test question "Does he really?" The question does not make sense for a performative. You cannot sensibly ask if I promised after I say that "I promise". Similarly for "I apologize". But the question makes sense if I say "I'm sorry". This is not a performative but an expression of my feelings. Since it might be insincere then the question makes sense. My statement could be false. But if I say "I apologize" then even if insincere I still have apologized. Another phrase which can be useful is "I am willing to". This can be used in front of a performative and make sense but not in front of a report or an expression of feeling. E.g., I am willing to apologize. But not I am willing to feel sorry. So it seems that we do have some practical rules of thumb for distinguishing performatives and constatives

even though we do not have a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. This is more than enough to make the distinction clear and applicable to a large variety of examples.

A final development in Austin which may be valuable in working out a list of performatives is that of dividing them into five categories. This gives some organization to a rather large and unwieldy list of verbs developed so far. The classes are called 1) verdictives, 2) exercitives, 3) commisives, 4) behabitives, 5) expositives. Austin provides a description of each class with a fairly exhaustive list of the relevant performative verbs. I will present this information and comment briefly on Searle's attempt to improve on this taxonomy.

1) Verdictives are typified by giving a verdict which can be final as in a jury, umpire or formal type of verdict or can be only an appraisal or an estimate. It is essentially giving a finding as to something--fact or value--which for whatever reasons is hard to be certain about.

2) Exercitives are the exercising of powers, rights or influence. Such things as ordering, appointing and advising.

3) Commisives commit you to do something such as the making of a promise, the stating of intentions or agreeing with someone.

4) Behabitives are a more miscellaneous group and have to do with attitudes and social behaviour. Examples would include apologizing, congratulating, cursing and challenging.

5) Expositives are the most difficult to define. They

make plain how our utterances fit into the course of an argument or conversation. That is, they deal with how we are using words and are in this general sense expository. Examples include "I argue that", "I concede", "I illustrate", "I conclude", and "I assume".

Austin concedes that such a category system is just beginning. The final two classes are not satisfactory. Perhaps we need more classes. Perhaps there is still some overlap. This is a first word not a final word. We can look now at the five groups in a little more detail with a more complete listing of verbs.

1) Verdictives. These include: acquit, convict, find (as a matter of fact), hold, rule, calculate, reckon, estimate, locate, place, date, measure, put it as, grade, rank, rate, assess, value, describe, characterize, diagnose and analyse. Verdictives consist of delivering a finding, official or unofficial upon evidence or reasons as to fact or value so far as these are distinguishable. A judicial act rather than an executive or legislative one (both of these are exercitives). There are obvious connections with true and false since we can have a true estimate, appraisal, verdict, etc.

2) Exercitives. These include: order, sentence, levy, choose, bequeath, warn, pray, urge, proclaim, enact, dedicate, command, fine, vote for, claim, pardon, advise, annul, reprieve, grant, nominate, resign, plead, recomend, quash, repeal, veto, declare open or closed. They are the

giving of a decision in favour of a certain course of action or the advocing in such a course of action. It is a decision that something is to be so as opposed to a judgment that it is so. It is an award rather than an assessment. A sentence rather than a verdict.

3) Commissives. These include: promise, contract, covenant, undertake, intend, mean, plan to, propose to, guarantee, vow, adopt, espouse, agree, oppose, swear, bet, consent, and favour. The whole point is to commit the speaker to a certain course of action. The "I will" in the marriage ceremony is a good example. Of course the commitment need not be serious or formal as many of the verbs in the list indicate.

4) Behabitives. These include the notion of reaction to other people's behaviour and fortunes and of attitudes and expressions of attitudes to someone else's past conduct or imminent conduct. Sample verbs include: for apologies--apologize; for thanks--thank; for sympathy--deplore, commiserate, condole, compliment, congratulate, felicitate, and sympathize; for attitudes--resent, criticize, grumble about, complain of, applaud, overlook, deprecate, blame, approve, favour; for greetings--welcome, bid farewell; for wishes--bless, curse, toast, drink to, wish; and for challenges--dare, defy, protest, challenge. Behabitives are the area in which insincerity is most likely.

5) Expositives. These are used in acts of exposition, involving the expounding of views, the conducting of

arguments, and the clarifying of usages or references. The list of expositives includes: 1. affirm, deny, state, describe, class, identify. 2. remark, mention. 3. inform, apprise, tell, answer, rejoin, ask. 4. testify, report, swear, conjecture. 5. accept, concede, agree, withdraw, adhere to, object to, repudiate. 6. correct, revise. 7. begin by, conclude by. 7a. interpret, distinguish, analyse, define. 7b. illustrate, explain, formulate. 7c. mean, refer, call, understand, regard as.

The lists may be useful for comparing with student lists. Austin saw his work as the beginning of an attempt to understand language better not as a finished product. It would allow for some originality on the part of students investigating the area. The categories are certainly not final nor are the lists exhaustive.

Searle attempted what he considered an alternative improved taxonomy building on the work of Austin (Searle, 1980). I will not attempt to present his detailed position but only mention a few points which could be valuable. Some students might be interested in pursuing the comparison of Austin and Searle further. Searle points out that there are many dimensions in which illocutionary acts can differ from one another (twelve in all). He distinguishes acts rather than verbs and uses Austin's later terminology. Some of these dimensions include:

1) differences in the purpose of the act

2) differences in the direction of fit between word and reality

3) differences of psychological state

4) differences in the force of the utterances

5) differences between those which require extralinguistic institutions and those which do not. His categories include: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations.

Austin's thought provides an excellent opportunity for thinking about language and developing more self-consciousness in our use of it. It can lead to many fruitful digressions. Many current researchers in philosophy and linguistics are building on his ideas.

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